

Decorator's Notebook

New Options Give Walls 'Design Appeal'

(NAPSA)—It used to be that homeowners and interior designers would do everything possible to make a home's interior walls go virtually unnoticed. Whether made from gypsum board or plaster, the blander a wall's appearance, the better. After all, walls weren't supposed to attract attention—their role was purely functional.

Now, thanks to a host of new and innovative decorating materials and treatments, walls are taking on personalities of their own. They're becoming a focal point for drama and visual appeal.

One word to describe current wall decorating trends is "eclectic;" people are adapting diverse design influences to fit their individual ideals. Some colors and styles are centering on traditional and even nostalgic themes. Others are focused on capturing an aura of comfort and security.

Earth shades, including tones of sienna, mustard, moss and gray, as well as metallic tones of copper, bronze, steel and silver, are the current colors of choice for interior walls. Americana wallpaper motifs such as colonial, updated Southwestern, antique flags and gingham checks and stripes are also enjoying a resurgence in popularity.

There is also a growing use of unconventional—but natural—wall finishing materials. Some of the more popular choices include metals such as steel and copper; natural fibers such as seagrass, sisal and jute; and glass that is sandblasted, textured or stained.

The hottest of these new wall treatments are decorative wall finishes made from crushed marble, limestone or gypsum plaster. When infused with pigments and skillfully applied, these tinted, mineral-based finishes can provide a warm, lustrous alternative to wallpaper and paneling—and they can be made to look like anything from polished stone to soft suede.

The marble and limestone-based finishes, known as "Venet-



New gypsum plaster finishes can add warmth and character to walls and ceilings.

ian," are applied by skilled craftsmen. Each applicator has his or her particular method for applying and finishing the product, and each creates a wall that is distinct from all others. The results can be stunning, but the process can be expensive. It is not unusual for a Venetian-type finish to cost from \$12 to \$18 or more per square foot.

A lower-cost alternative has been introduced by United States Gypsum Company. The USG Decorative Interior Finish System is a gypsum plaster-based finish that can be applied in virtually any pastel or earthtone shade, and can be troweled to capture a wide range of upscale semi-smooth and textured looks. The system captures the look and feel of extreme high-end Venetian and Tuscany-style finishes at a fraction of the cost.

Although not recommended for do-it-yourself application, the system can be installed with minimal surface preparation. It can be applied directly to new or existing drywall and, in the event of surface damage, the finish can be easily repaired.

For more information about the USG Decorative Interior Finish System, contact United States Gypsum Company at 800-USG-4YOU or visit the USG Web site at www.usg.com.